



**The Rotary Club
of Bexhill-on-Sea
1923 - 2013
90 Years of Service**



BEXHILL MUSEUM
Encouraging Discovery

No.

L 2642

***The Rotary Club
of
Bexhill-on-Sea***

1923 - 2013

Inauguration Date: 12 March 1923

Charter Date: 18 July 1923

District 1120

RIBI No 122

RI No 1500

The Rotary Club
of
Seattle-on-Sea

1923-1924

President: J. H. Smith

Secretary: J. H. Smith

Treasurer: J. H. Smith

Members: J. H. Smith

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Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to write the introduction for this history of the Rotary Club of Bexhill-on-Sea, produced to mark the club's 90th Anniversary. I am proud to be the President of a club that has so successfully provided service to the town of Bexhill, the wider district and internationally, and I believe it would be appropriate to quote the words of Michael Lovitt, Club President 1998/99, from his introduction to the history of the club's first 75 years:

"Over 75 years much has been achieved and the club can surely celebrate its anniversary with pride and with a very real sense of achievement. Bexhill Rotary Club has two strong and flourishing international contact club links and has continually shown active involvement in District activities at a variety of levels.

There has been a strong common core running through our history best embodied in the four objects of Rotary. Within this idea of continuity within change, it is most fitting to note how regularly the name Maynard appears in our club. Hugh's father was President in 1929, Hugh himself in 1973. Hugh compiled our first history in 1980 and now he has produced a second version. And to cap it all his son has joined us this year. What a wonderful family record. We must look to the future with confidence and hope".

The actions and activities graphically illustrated by this updated history, confirm that the club continues to aspire to achieve the Rotary ideal of the four way test of the things we think, say and do: Is it the truth, is it fair to all concerned, will it build goodwill and better friendships and will it be beneficial to all concerned?

I believe as we celebrate our 90th year, we can confirm that we have achieved the hopes and desires of Past President Michael Lovitt. Our club has grown and will continue in future years to grow in both stature and its commitment to our local community, the wider district and to Rotary International, staying true to our motto, Service Above Self.

John Cooper

July 2013

Foreword

The bulk of this history was written by Past President Hugh Maynard, who wrote the first history of the club covering the period 1923–1979 and then updated it to 1998 to mark the club's 75th Anniversary. The task of updating it to 2013, the club's 90th Anniversary, fell to Rotarians John Wilson and Brian Cope and, in the main, we have retained the text of the earlier editions but added to it to reflect events of the years 1999–2013. It is therefore most appropriate that we reproduce P.P. Hugh Maynard's foreword:

"In producing this history which I trust will be found informative, sometimes amusing and perhaps a somewhat too brief account of Rotary affairs in Bexhill, I must record my thanks particularly to Past Presidents Freddie Clare and Peter Evenden who undertook a considerable amount of research some years earlier and who kindly put their findings at my disposal. Official records and minute books were lost or destroyed during the second world war and the history of the Rotary Club, prior to that time, has been gleaned from past members' effects, some senior members' memories and extracts taken from the Bexhill-on-Sea Observer".

Like Hugh Maynard we have drawn on club records, the annual reports of the club's Presidents and the personal recollections of members in writing this updated history of Bexhill Rotary Club. We extend our sincere thanks to them all.

Rotarians John Wilson & Brian Cope

June 2013



Genesis

It was a Sunday morning early in 1923 when it all happened. Rotary was beginning to spread all over the country and at "The Dove Cot" in Wickham Avenue, Cecil Sewell and Frank Bending met to discuss whether Bexhill should be in or out of this new movement. They opted for 'in' and there followed a period of great activity when possible members were short listed, visited and given the information that they wanted about the new concept.

Names on that list included some which, even 75 years later, were still familiar to most Bexhillians. Ralph Burstow (who was to become the new club's first Secretary), Jack Maynard, Tommy Austin, Walter Longley and Jack Mummery. The full list is recorded under founder members on page 29.

So it was, therefore, that on 12th March 1923, in the Devonshire Hotel, the inaugural lunch was held. Those present included the Mayor of Bexhill Cllr. Colonel R. Gibb, the Chairman of the new District 112 Bob Wearing, President Edward Strange of the Tunbridge Wells Club and Rotarian Colonel John Langham who was Secretary of the Hastings Club.

There can be no doubt that most of the inspiration to form the Bexhill Club came from Tunbridge Wells whose President was business partner and lifelong friend of Frank Bending, one of the two instigators.

After lunch the District Chairman spoke on the subject of Rotary and its aims. At that time there was a Rotary

motto: "Service Above Self - he profits most who serves best". The Chairman chose to sum this up in one word "unselfishness" and said that "Rotarians are not out to please themselves but to help the other fellow..." He said that Rotary was a brotherhood which he likened to an arch: "as you know, the stones are only useful as they lie close together". He concluded that Rotarians became useful because the movement draws them close together in fellowship and so they can withstand great strain as a corporate whole.

Frank Bending followed this speech and, having thanked the District Chairman for his remarks, commented upon the aptness of his simile especially bearing in mind the close association with building of some of those on the top table. He then proceeded to move the proposition that called the club into being. Cecil Jewell seconded this and the Town Clerk, Mr S. J. Taylor, made a speech in support of the motion. The motion was, of course, carried unanimously.

Frank Bending and Cecil Sewell were then appointed as the first Vice Presidents of the club. It is significant that Vice Presidents only were elected. It was the intention of the new club to invite Mr. Stapylton-Smith to be the first President, and it was only when this proved to be not possible that Frank Bending was elected to the Presidential Chair. Strangely, the other Vice President could not take on the task when his turn came. He was, by then, the Mayor of Bexhill and even he did not think that he



could serve in both offices in the same year.

All in all this was a memorable occasion and at 2.35pm on that bright but chilly day the members of the Bexhill Rotary Club left the Devonshire Hotel for the first time. Three of those Rotarians, Frank Bending, Walter Longley and Jack Maynard were already the fathers of future Presidents of the Club they had just founded and another, Bert Heather, was godfather to one of the Presidents of the 60's. Little is recorded about the presentation of the Charter. It is known that it was granted to the club on 18th July 1923 but by whom and on what occasion remains a mystery.

Although the Bexhill Club was the 1,500th chartered in Rotary International, it was well in the forefront locally. In 1920 there were no Rotary

Clubs in Kent or Sussex. The Margate Club was the first, formed in May 1921 and Tunbridge Wells followed in December of that year. 1922 saw its first clubs in Hastings and Eastbourne and in that year No 3 District (which embraced London, fifteen other counties, the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands) was divided into five areas. Kent, Sussex and Surrey became known as Area 2 and this became District 112 in 1923. Clubs in this District that share the 1923 foundation year with Bexhill are Bromley, Chatham and Folkestone. An interesting relic, still jealously guarded, is that under the terms of the Charter, Bexhill Club was to meet fortnightly. It is believed that, in common with Hastings and Margate Clubs, Bexhill is one of the very few clubs in the world meeting fortnightly!

1923 to 1939

There is no doubt that the new Rotary Club took itself seriously from the beginning, starting promptly to live up to its motto "Service Above Self".

In retrospect it is interesting to note that some of the matters to which it turned its attention were singular to the times and were matters of social concern now catered for by the welfare state, whilst on the other hand there seems to be a number of hardy annuals to which the club still gave it's attention to seventy five years later. Almost immediately after it was formed the club directed its attention to the matter of further education. This was a time when

education, and especially further education, was not provided by the state on the scale now accepted as normal. The club decided to pay the fees of selected promising scholars to continue their education in the Secondary School, as it was then known. They also paid fees and arranged transport of selected pupils to special courses and evening classes arranged by the Hastings Education Committee. This was only part of the work, however, because the club formed its "Boys' Works Committee" and, between 1923 and 1937, over one hundred boys were placed for technical training by the club. It is said that in every case, as a result of specialised



training, the boys made a mark in their career in industry. In the late 1920's when unemployment was severe, the Club inaugurated a "Spend for Employment" campaign seeking the help of the public to provide local employment by having various jobs such as gardening, decorating, repairs etc. carried out.

It appears they took their vocational service almost too seriously at first. Frank Bending is on record as saying that, from the very start, the Rotary Club had tried to promote in the business community in the town those high ideals of service in business practice which was so essentially one of the main objects of the movement. He added "of course it cannot be denied among the frivolous that those ideals had the effect of rather

enveloping Rotary members with an atmosphere of saintliness". In the early days of the movement an effort to obviate that sort of thing was made in a suggestion that every member of a Rotary Club should be elected and sent there by his own trade association who would well be able to judge whether he was a saint or not. This proved to be an impracticable idea, especially in Bexhill, which was a non-industrial town.

Frank gave it as his opinion that the next best method of debunking any idea of saintliness was the formation of the Women's Wheel of Service and he said, "I want to suggest that one of their finest efforts was to bring down to earth the members of the club from cloudy eminence of those ideals which were inclined to wrap some of them up".

Local Initiatives

Whilst all this vocational service was going on however, the other committees of the club were not asleep. From the beginning the members were aware that, even in 1923, there were a number of charitable organisations in the town, all working independently. It was realised that co-ordination of these varying offers of help would be sensible and thus a Central Aid Committee was established comprising representatives of all charitable organisations in the borough. Once established the committee met regularly and over the years continued its work under the title of Council of Social Services - now the Citizens Advice Bureau, upon which a member of the

Rotary Club still sits.

Reference was made earlier to the formation of the Women's Wheel of Service. Realising the assistance that ladies could give to the activities of Rotary, the Rotary Club assisted the inauguration in 1924, of the Women's Wheel of Service and their Charter was presented in early 1925. This "Inner Wheel" as the movement is now known was one of the very first Inner Wheel Clubs to be established in Great Britain. Their history must be the subject of another publication but suffice it to say here that the efforts and work undertaken by members of the Inner Wheel have been of the highest order. Sadly the Bexhill Inner Wheel was



disbanded in 1996.

In 1925 the Rotary Club formed a body of members who were prepared to be called upon at any hour to transport people to hospital in an emergency. It must be remembered that our own Bexhill Hospital was not then in existence, and transporting sick people to Hastings by car must have been a memorable experience! Convalescent people requiring transport to hospitals were similarly catered for and this tradition still exists. In addition to the hospital car service run independently, Rotarians still transport blind people and infirm people to social events and the like. During the mid twenties the Rotary Club was active in providing white walking sticks for the blind.

Bexhill town held an annual Horse Show and Regatta in those days and the club assisted with the organisation of both events and still continues to do so in respect of the Horse Show. The Regattas are now organised by the Bexhill Rowing and Sailing Clubs respectively.

Mention was made earlier of Bexhill Hospital. Opened on 13th May 1933. The Rotary Club was very active in the raising of funds by the organisation of whist drives and dances held in the Sydenham Cafe - now demolished - which stood at the corner of Sea Road and Cantelupe Road. T. J. Austin represented the club on the Hospital Management Committee. Pip Clare, Chairman of Inner Wheel in its 50th year, was one of the three original Sisters at the opening of the hospital. Jack Maynard was architect of the nurses home and, later, the out patients

department which was added in 1937.

No Rotary year would be complete without the traditional Ladies Night and, as a comparison with present day trends in gastronomic delights, the following menu was offered in 1929 on 23rd January at the Granville Hotel under the Presidency of Jack Mummery.

Hors D'Oeuvres
Consomme Xavier
Soles Colbert

Braised Fillets of Beef and Madeira Sauce
Cauliflower and Brussels Sprouts
Roast and Boiled Potatoes
Asparagus and Melted Butter
Roast Pheasant and Game Chips
Salad in Season
Vanilla Ice Cream
Fruit Salad and Cream
Coffee

The matters dealt with by the club between 1930 and 1939 were considerable. In 1930 carol concerts at Christmas were held for charitable purposes and in the same year an extensive survey of visitors to the town ascertained their opinion of the town of Bexhill. The result of the survey seems to have been mislaid and one can read into that as one likes! 1931 saw the introduction of meetings of international visitors and overseas students and the club organised frequent lunches in order to foster the spirit of international service and understanding. This was furthered in 1931 by the start of correspondence between overseas Rotary Clubs and valuable contact was made with clubs in Australia, New Zealand and the United States of



America.

At home the club was responsible for the formation of a Safety First Committee which, later, was to become

the Road Safety Committee and was, for many years, under the chairmanship of Harry Ward - President of the Club in 1961.

Wider Concerns

On this theme the vexed question of sea pollution was investigated and in 1936 and 1937, Freddie Clare, President of the Club in 1958, assisted a Mr. Hughes in his investigations. Mr. Hughes had been Medical Officer of Health at Newport, Monmouthshire. His research involved taking samples of seawater, and watercourses, making maps of outfalls etc. The solemn conclusion reached was that the sewage outfall at Galley Hill was a source of pollution which he considered "frightful" and it was recommended that a sewage disposal plant be constructed at Crowhurst. The matter remained under consideration until the early 90's! A later member and President of the club in 1952 was Dr. Richard Toleman, Medical Officer of Health to the Bexhill Borough Council. He, too, came under fire about the pollution. He declared the sea to be sewage polluted but that the pollution was not harmful. Swimmers were still not convinced. In 1935 traffic problems were beginning to become evident (what would those members think of today's problems?) and the Rotary Club made frequent representations to the Council on this subject. In 1936 a vigorous campaign led to the improvement of floral displays in our parks and in 1937 a campaign was launched to clean up the

streets of Bexhill - streets apparently strewn with litter. The seafront also came under attack with the result that improvements were made to "make it more beautiful". In 1938 proposals for inaugurating a musical festival enjoyed some success and there was also a proposal for holding a local boys' summer camp.

During this period members were taking active part in personal service and assisted residents in many different ways. But the threat of war was looming over the country and the Rotary Club was to play a magnificent role in the terrible years which were to lie ahead.

Before the declaration, Rotary became heavily involved in supporting the construction of a new sports centre on Bexhill Down. In July 1939 the Bexhill-on-Sea Observer reported "Bexhill goes to the Great Fair - four days show on the Down. Public support Rotary Club's enterprise". Eight months' hard labour culminated in President Bill Gun welcoming the Mayor Alderman W. N. Cuthbert and inviting him to open the fair. Enough money (£405) was raised to furnish the sports centre and the project was pronounced a huge success. It was reported that the fair had to close down at 10.30pm on Friday night to comply with the blackout regulations - that night being the one chosen for a massive



A.R.P. exercise. "As the great majority of Bexhillians are usually indoors by eleven-o'clock... and probably most of them in

bed, this A.R.P trial will involve no departure from ordinary habit and custom..." quoted the Observer.

The 1939-1945 War

Upon the outbreak of war, and at the request of the Mayor, Alderman. N. Cuthbert, Rotary took complete charge of entertainment, provision of sports equipment and comforts for many thousands of troops stationed in the area. Alderman Cuthbert wrote to the War Office asking that Stanley Courtenay (President in 1940 and 1941) be released from his commitment to go to Bombay as a reserve officer, to stay in Bexhill to organise the entertainment for the troops. Fortunately for everybody the request was granted.

A stick of three high explosive bombs fell from a JU 88 early one morning in 1940, one of which fell on the rear of the stage of the De La Warr Pavilion. The Borough Surveyor said that, as a result of the severe damage, the Pavilion must remain out of action for the duration of the war. Stanley Courtenay exerted his considerable charm and a great deal of pressure and said "No". As a result, Stanley persuaded the Mayor and Borough Surveyor to block up the damaged proscenium opening and to create a new stage forward thereof. The De La Warr Pavilion was ready to become the focus of major activity over the coming years. Dances were held every Saturday night and among the members of visiting dance bands was one, Spike

Milligan, who has referred in happy terms to those days in his hilarious writings.

The WVS supplied refreshments under the chairmanship of the indefatigable Mrs. Joyce Alexander (later Mayor and Freeman of the Borough and M.B.E.). This activity alone raised about one thousand pounds towards sports equipment for the troops. Rotary also assisted in the running of a British restaurant organised by Mrs. Hugh Williams. Troops were provided with sporting equipment, cricket and football leagues were organised and trophies obtained. Members paid regular visits to outlying searchlight stations and gun emplacements. Parties were run and concerts provided for children and the club generally helped keep local morale at a high level. No history would be complete without mentioning the name of Tom Gardner (President in 1942 and 1943 and later in 1963 and Rotary International Representative, as district governors were then known, in 1949-50) who partnered Stanley Courtenay in all the complex work of those years. Inspired by the Rotary Club's activities the townspeople of Bexhill purchased two cottages on the Limpfield Estate for disabled men of the Merchant Navy.

The club also inaugurated a unique arrangement in that on the first Sunday of every month Rotary held a non-



denominational church service in the De La Warr Pavilion, known as "Absent Friends Service". Details of the service and address given were printed and sent in the form of a Newsletter each month to every known Bexhillian serving in His Majesty's Forces at home and overseas, and even to prison camps. These were well received. In addition, of course, members individually served the war effort in one way or another in the

Observer Corps, A.R.P., Police or the Home Guard.

During the war various "weeks" were held to aid war savings, war weapons etc. and the members of the club were actively engaged in those efforts. Because of dangerous conditions and heavy workload in 1940, regular club luncheons were held monthly but by 1941 the regular routine had been resumed.

21st Birthday

The Bexhill Club came "of age" and on May 14th 1944 a supper party was held in the Granville Hotel with Tom Gardner in the chair. A fully representative gathering was present to hear the speeches and also to honour

the outstanding service to Rotary by Alva Butler (Assistant Honorary Secretary) and to Mrs. Arthur Whicher (Honorary Secretary of the Inner Wheel Club) both of whom had held office for seventeen years.

Post-War

At the conclusion of hostilities, the club began rebuilding its membership with members returning from wartime to peacetime duties. In 1946 the club launched its first "off-spring", the Club of Heathfield and Waldron and here again Stanley Courtenay's name was to the forefront in the organisation.

In 1948 Bexhill and the Gouda Club in Holland made their official contact. The Gouda contact was initially made by Bernard Jansen (President 1938) during the war years. But it lapsed and started in earnest in 1948 and has thrived ever since. A photograph of the party clearly shows Past Presidents Freddie Clare,

Gordon Davis and Ronnie Phelps with their wives led by St. John Sechiari who was President that year.

In 1950 District 112 held the annual conference at the De La Warr Pavilion. All contact clubs joined the conference and it is noted that ladies carrying the many national flags paraded with national anthems playing. It is recorded that there were tears in the eyes of the French and Dutch contingents - it was a very emotional event, one of the first since the war. It was generally agreed that if any justification was needed for having contact clubs, the 1950 conference confirmed it.

The Sackville Hotel was the conference



headquarters hotel and the weekend was voted a great success. The address given by the Reverend Morton-George, Pastor of the Methodist Church on that Sunday morning in 1950 was remembered and referred to by a Dutch Rotarian at the District Conference twenty-three years later.

Activities continued for several years with service projects being well supported. It was in 1955 in February that the next major event took place. The Rotary movement celebrated its Golden Jubilee and to mark the occasion President Gordon L. Davis held a civic Rotary luncheon at the Granville Hotel and presented to the Mayor, Councillor Mrs. Joyce Alexander, a "Diary of Events" to be positioned to the west of the main entrance doors of the De La Warr Pavilion. President Gordon Davis said that he hoped the diary would help to prevent the unfortunate clashes of dates which were always occurring among organisations in the town - a sentiment echoed by Mrs. Alexander. Later, President Gordon Davis, accompanied by Randall Pearson, Tom Gardner, Freddie Clare and their wives (Pip Clare was then President of the Bexhill Inner Wheel) attended a service at Canterbury Cathedral when the District held a service in the nave to mark the Golden Jubilee.

In 1956 Randall Pearson gave up his post as Honorary Secretary and Wally West took over the job, a post he was to hold very successfully until 1963 when he became the club's very first Second Vice President. He succeeded to the Chair in 1965.

1957 saw a series of "firsts". By kind permission of Reg Larkin (President in

1967) the first barbecue was held in the grounds of Woodsgate Place and that was a members only occasion. The first Bexhill Safe Driving Rally was organised and held on East Parade. This was a combined operation between Bexhill Road Safety Committee and the Rotary Club. In later years the site was moved to West Parade.

The year was a busy one because a contingent of our Gouda Contact Club was to visit Bexhill from 3rd to 9th of June 1958. Apart from hospitality received in members' homes, a mayoral reception and official luncheon, the principle event was to visit Windsor Castle, Hampton Court and Kew which, together with lunch and dinner, was budgeted to cost approximately £2.00 per head. A presidential dinner and dance at the Grand Hotel Eastbourne finished the week in memorable fashion. The entire itinerary and programme for the week was produced in dutch for our Rotary friends. A measure of the success of the week is recorded in the official report: "it will perhaps suffice to say that the visitors were very willing to join any party which was going and that the social life of Bexhill took, for a week, an unusually gay and light-hearted form".

In September 1958 the second Safe Driving Rally took place and on 27th November there was a meeting of Bexhill, Hastings and Battle Clubs, with their wives, at the Sackville Hotel to hear a talk from District Chairman Ron Proudler on his second visit to the United States of America to attend the Rotary Convention.

In 1959 the first of a series of Donkey Derby Race Meetings was organised and



these continued for a further four years and succeeded in raising a considerable sum of money for charitable purposes. The final Donkey Derby in 1963 was held in torrential rain and I can well remember Dan Kessick's triumphal claim on the pluvius policy which made no small contribution to the day's profits. 1959 also saw President Alderman Jack Baker elected Mayor of the Borough of Bexhill. The first of a series of car treasure hunts was organised during the

year when the club competed against Bexhill Round Table for the Clare Cup, donated by P.P. Freddie Clare. It is recorded in Rotary News that Bexhill Club beat Bexhill Round Table by a small margin.

In May 1960 a return visit to Gouda was memorable and the hospitality lavish. In later years both clubs agreed that inter-club visits must be on a more moderate scale, the emphasis being on family hospitality.

Past Rotarians Club

On 2nd February 1960, a luncheon meeting was organised and all known past Rotarians were invited with a view to looking into the possibility of forming a Past Rotarians Club. Under the Presidency of Paddy Huggard the club assisted in the formation of an interim

committee and Dudley Beck was elected Chairman. From that meeting the Club of Past Rotarians rapidly grew into the thriving organisation it is today and the Bexhill Rotary Club honoured the President of the Past Rotarians Club for the time being with honorary membership.

Fathers and Sons

It was in 1960 that Frank Roy Bending was elected President of the club. Roy's father Alderman F. R. Bending was the club's founder President in 1923. Other father and son Presidents have been T. J. Austin and R. N. Austin - 1933/1945, and J. E. Maynard and J. H. Maynard - 1929/1973. In addition founder Member W. T. Longley's sons Peter and Derry have kept the family tradition going, Peter being Club President in 1966. And founder member H. G. Heather's godson

was Peter Evenden, President in 1964.

1961 saw the second successful barbecue at Woodsgate Place, this time being joined by members of Bexhill Round Table and 41 Club. It is recorded that "an adventurous menu of chicken, sausages and barbecue sauce was prepared by Peter Evenden and Hugh Maynard with their wives - the relish with which the fare was consumed being some small compensation to their hot and arduous task". The same team with many other helpers in later years



provided hot dogs (with or without onions) at the annual Carnival festivities in the Polegrove, timber and coke fuel eventually being superseded by Calor gas! Records show that an average afternoon's sale included 1500 sausages, 1000 hamburgers and 300 pounds of onions. A new project at Sedlescombe had been completed in the form of the Pestalozzi International Village. On 23rd July 1961 a large contingent paid an official visit to the village designed by Sir Hugh Casson and, at the time of the visit, it was still in an early phase of completion.

In 1962 the Gouda Club returned to Bexhill for a week in May and a more

informal programme was organised for the greater part of the week. However, the party enjoyed a trip to Kew, a trip down the river in a water bus and then dinner in the House of Commons at the invitation of our Member, Mr. Bryant Godman-Irvine. The following day an inspection of Eastbourne's Star Brewery (with samples) was enjoyed but there is no record of our visitors' comments! Later in the year the first Rotary Careers Convention at Bexhill Grammar School for Boys became the forerunner of a number of similar careers conventions or exhibitions at other schools in the district and which were considered to be well received by the students.

40 and Going Strong

1963 was the 40th Anniversary year of the Bexhill Club and the occasion was marked on July 23rd by a special meeting at which two of the founder members, Walter Longley and Jack Mummery, were present. A birthday cake was presented with the compliments of the catering department of the De La Warr Pavilion. Tom Gardner was again President and he suggested that the International Committee examine the possibility of a second contact club. The examination took longer than might have been imagined and it was in March 1966 that a preliminary visit to Douai Sud was made by a party of six Rotarians to join them at lunch. Such was the hospitality both during the lunch and for many hours afterwards that the contact was firmly established and has blossomed since. A

meeting between Bexhill, Gouda and Douai Sud Clubs was later arranged, and several members of Douai Sud visited Bexhill in April 1966. In May, sixteen members and their wives visited Douai to join in their Charter celebrations. Champagne flowed and a very good time was had by all.

1966 was memorable for at least two other occasions. First, Her Majesty the Queen paid an official visit to Bexhill and eight members of the Rotary Club were presented to Her Majesty. Second, Past President Jack Baker was elected Mayor of the Borough for the third time.

1968 saw the formation of the first Bexhill Interact Club when on September 20th President Bernard Wilton presented the Charter to the Chairman of the Interact Club, Jeremy Maynard, elder son of a club member



and grandson of one of the founder members. The 1967 Community Service Committee had originated the proposed Interact Club with the generous co-operation of the Rotary Club of Isle of Sheppey. Based at the local Secondary Modern School, headmaster Colin Evans (President in 1976) gave energetic support to the Chairman of the Committee, Bill McFarlane. Twenty boys attended their Charter Night which was attended by civic dignitaries and representatives of District 112. Sadly this club could not be sustained.

Further inter-club visits took place with Douai at Le Touquet airport in October 1966 and, earlier, with a joint meeting with Gouda and Douai Clubs at Ostend - described by President Reg Larkin as "a unique occasion in Rotary history" and which was, as far as was known, the first time that a British club had held an ordinary meeting on

foreign soil.

Reg Larkin commemorated his year in office by presenting a large mobile display unit for visiting club banners, the original and full Presidents' collar and similar items. This was much admired and was copied for further banners by President John Lewis in 1977 - making a handsome pair. Such was the receipt of many further banners that a third display was added some years later.

1969 will be well remembered as the year when President George Coombs organised a massive auction sale to raise funds for new kitchen equipment for the W.V.S. (later the W.R.V.S.) headquarters for Meals on Wheels in Buckhurst Road. Approximately £1,500 was raised and there followed an argument by the authorities concerned as to the type of equipment to be purchased. It is not for this history to comment on the wisdom of the authorities' final decision.

Golden Anniversary

Full Rotary activities continued for the next few years until 1973 when the Bexhill Club celebrated its Golden Anniversary. The President for the year was Hugh Maynard, son of founder member Jack Maynard, and his desire for the year to be one of happiness and good fun was well satisfied. On 18th July a Grand Champagne Supper and Dance and Cabaret was held in the main hall of the De La Warr Pavilion. Both contact clubs sent large contingents of representatives (Douai arriving 24 hours earlier than expected!), and together with guests

from neighbouring clubs and the local authority, set a glittering scene. Ladies Night at the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, was similarly a splendid affair in March 1974.

However, the needs of others were not forgotten and the local Sea Scouts benefited from substantial profits arising from an amateur variety show appropriately called the "Bexidoo". Local talent - old and very young - blossomed and this idea was copied in succeeding years by other organisations. The Golden Jubilee year coincided with the 50th year in Rotary of Ernest



Ruffhead whose membership category was Gas Service and who had joined the Club after leaving his original club of Darlington.

Sporting activities since the war have included bowls, golf, sailing, sponsored swimming and walking. Annual competitions are held with local clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, Past Rotarians and many more. In particular an annual golf match against West Worthing Rotary Club has become something of a "needle" match, Bexhill managing to win on a few occasions!

In 1977 a group of enthusiasts originated the annual Gourmet Evening which they described as an "evening of

gastronomic delight". Everything from food preparation, cooking, serving and washing-up is undertaken by these worthy men and they have even undertaken a special Sunday luncheon held at St. Mary's School which is popular and oversubscribed.

In July 1998 the club celebrated its 75th Anniversary in style with friends from our Douai Sud and Gouda contact clubs at Powdermill Hotel and a celebratory sing-song outside the sailing club. Over £10,000 was raised for Rotary projects in the year. To mark the event in a more permanent fashion Hugh Maynard updated the history of the club he had produced in 1980.

The New Millennium

As we entered the new millennium the most significant change was the rapid movement of the club into the cyber world. In 1999 e-mail was in its infancy and our directory for that year did not contain any e-mail addresses. However, by 2002 very nearly every member had an e-mail address although it was not until 2010 that our only remaining non e-mail member, P.P. John Raeburn, joined the digital age. In 2004 P.P. Ray Dixon set up a website and over the succeeding years the club has continued to develop it as a source of information for members and as a publicity tool.

In 1997 Roy Sharpe had asked Richard Caie to chair a small sub-committee to look at possible projects for the club to mark the approaching millennium. The objective was not just to mark the event

but to do so in a way which would enable the club to improve the quality of life of those less fortunate people within our community. Our three main criteria were that the project should be forward looking and youth based, of a permanent nature and in accord with Rotary ideals of service. We identified a need at St. Jude's Refuge (for women and children escaping domestic violence) for a recreation room for the use of the children who live there but had no indoor area where they could play in safety.

To provide this an extension to the building was necessary and the millennium project sub-committee proceeded to negotiate with the various parties involved including Rother District Council, Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society and Hyde Housing, all of whom



were very helpful. In June 2000 we learned that funding had been made available for the building of the new room and this meant that all our planning, lobbying and persuading had been successful. It was to take until September 2001 before the room was finally built and then officially opened by Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs. Joanne Gadd. However, the fruits of our club's millennium project are still enjoyed, and no doubt will be for many years to come, by disadvantaged children, who through no fault of their own find themselves uprooted from their own homes, school and friends and living at St. Jude's.

It is appropriate to note that this was not the first time the club had come to the aid of St. Jude's. In 1977 the club had responded to a request for help from the refuge's founder, Megan Trace, and club members helped make the original premises at Barrack Hall in Bexhill's Old

Town, watertight and provided furnishings for it

In 1999 the R.I. President Carlo Ravizza sent a postcard to all 27,000 Club Presidents. It read "If you are able to read this you are among the world's most fortunate - an estimated 855 million people cannot". It went on to say that 130 million children were growing up without access to basic education and urged clubs to set up projects to support literacy. Rodney Gadsden as Youth & Vocational Service Chairman eagerly accepted the challenge and established "Reading Partners", a scheme to help primary school children develop their reading skills. Eleven Rotarians and two wives came forward as the first partners with other volunteers, Rotarians and non-Rotarians joining the scheme over subsequent years, and this worthwhile service to children in local schools continues to this day.

Charitable Activities

Children were not the only ones in members' thoughts that year and Peter Mitchell-Davis and Harold Lawrence raised £7,000 for the Macmillan Cancer Research Fund with a sponsored walk along the south-west coastal path from Minehead to Studland Bay. In the same year the club was one of only 17 clubs in the District to receive a Rotary International President's Citation for achieving the eight specific objectives of that Rotary year served as testament to the drive and success of the club.

The club continued to find new initiatives to help those within the local community in 2003 it held the first of its charity walks, organising a day of marshalled walking routes suitable for all abilities so that supporters of local charitable groups could raise sponsorship for their causes. The walk continues to be an annual fixture in the club's programme.

In 2002/03 President Harold Lawrence used his presidency to further a cause that had long been close to his heart, sporting opportunities for children with



disabilities, by establishing 1066 Specials. Today the club operates football teams for disabled youngsters of all ages, hosts an annual sports day for similar clubs across the southeast and participates in numerous competitions across the region. The Rotary Club has regularly supported the Specials with sponsorship and the provision of shirts bearing the Rotary roundel.

The club's 80th Anniversary was celebrated in 2003 and, like the 75th, we were joined by members of our Gouda and Douia Sud contact clubs. A further anniversary was celebrated in 2005 with the 50th annual golf competition against the Rotary Club of West Worthing. Originally a cricket contest the event changed to a golf competition when both clubs found difficulty in fielding eleven sufficiently agile members for the cricket square!

For many years the club has enjoyed good relations with Bexhill Sailing Club, perhaps because it has had so many past Rotary Presidents amongst its membership and the sailing club's premises have been used on many occasions by the Rotary Club when participating in blood pressure checking days.

Blood pressure was not the only health issue that the club focussed on, with Ray Dixon establishing a hearing aid service in 2006/07. This scheme, which continues to this day, sees trained club members providing home visits to those whose hearing aids need attention, saving them a trip to the local audiology department and enabling the hospital to concentrate on patients with

more serious conditions.

Co-operation with the sailing club reached its zenith when the club responded to a request from St. Mary's School to teach the children sailing – with the first requirement being a boat! In fact with the help of the sailing club two were provided, "Bill" and "Ben", which were subsequently used at the sailing club to teach the youngsters to sail.

Youth projects have always had a high priority to the club with two annual events being of particular note. The first is Rotary Youth Speaks, a public speaking competition for schools, jointly organised with the Rotary Club of Battle. Over the years all the local schools have taken part and it has become perhaps one of the most rewarding events of the year, possibly because of the enthusiasm of pupils to do well and with the thought that the winners go forward to a district final followed by regional and national finals. Every pupil is awarded a certificate and book token. The second regular annual event has been our clubs involvement in mock interviews for year 10 students at St. Richard's Catholic College. Not only do a large number of club members participate but we also facilitate the involvement of interviewers from other Rotary Clubs as well as many non-Rotarians. The experience gained by the students of being interviewed by a stranger is apparently invaluable to the students in helping build confidence and self-esteem, and feedback has always been most encouraging. We have also been involved in similar events at Bexhill College and Bexhill High School.



Interact Clubs

In 2005 P.P. David Stedman indicated that he would again like to see an Interact Club in the town. Fortuitously Richard Caie and Ray Dixon had already established strong links with St. Richards Catholic College in running Young Enterprise programmes and mock interview days so they approached the Vice Principal who fully embraced the idea. The club was quickly established and chartered on 15th March 2006 by the visiting R.I.B.I. President Mike Webb. The club initially met weekly but this proved too much for the pupils and after various changes settled to a very successful fortnightly club, meeting at lunchtime. It works closely with the Rotary Club supporting the charity walks day, and senior citizens tea party, as well as their own fund raising efforts. A measure of their success is that in 2010 they were presented with a Rotary

International Presidential Citation in recognition of their "exemplary action and service". Later that year three members of the club confidently presented details of their activities from the stage of a District Conference.

Following the press publicity at the launch of St. Richards Interact, Ray was asked to give a presentation to RC of Senlac on how the club had been set up. St. Mary's then approached Ray to see if we could establish an Interact Club at St. Mary's. Council felt that one Interact Club was enough for us so Ray followed up on Senlac's interest in Interact and, after a somewhat lengthy gestation period, St. Mary's was chartered in February 2010. At the time of writing the seeds have been sown for Interact Clubs at Bexhill College and Bexhill High School which, if successful, will see clubs in all of the senior schools of Bexhill.

Polio Plus

In 1985 Rotary International launched Polio Plus, the first and largest internationally co-ordinated private sector public health initiative. Bexhill Club agreed to contribute £5,600 over four years and successfully organised a number of events to reach what was considered to be an ambitious target. In total Rotarians raised US\$247 million, double the launch target. In 1988 The World Health Assembly passed a resolution to eradicate polio setting into motion a global polio eradication

programme in the world's 125 polio-endemic countries. Rotary's overall contribution to the eradication effort now nears US\$800 million and such has been the success of the Rotary movement in this initiative that it attracted the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. As well as funds Rotarians have given their time to the immunisation programme during which more than two billion children have received oral polio vaccine. The club has continued to be active in it's



support for Polio Plus culminating in 2010/11 when President Frank Field cajoled club members to plant 6,000 purple crocuses across more than a dozen sites in the town. Although completed successfully the project proved more demanding than anticipated as the bulbs all had to be planted over one weekend! The colour

purple was chosen because that is the colour of the dye on a child's little finger that indicates the child has been inoculated against the deadly virus. It is hoped that these colourful floral displays will serve as an annual reminder of the challenges and success of this campaign that at the time of writing has eliminated polio in all but three countries.

District Officers

During the 80's, District 112 was renamed 1120 and a number of club members served on the District Committees. P.P. John Brockhurst served on the Foundation Committee for seven years and was Chairman for two of those years. R.P. Albert Freeman served with "Brock" and during his terms of office was selected to lead the Group Study Exchange Team from the U.K. to Australia in 1990. This was a very memorable visit and Albert received great praise for the way he had undertaken his task. P.P. John Crone chaired the Youth Exchange Committee for two years in 1994/95 and P.P. Gordon Viner served on the

Environment Committee. District 1120 was to the forefront in fund-raising and P.P. Dr. Malcolm Wicks served on the District Committee checking the progress of all clubs' fund-raising and exhorting them to do bigger and better things!

Whilst supportive of District initiatives Bexhill Club members have in more recent years largely directed their energies to the club and the Bexhill community with individual members also holding important positions as Chairmen, Treasurers or Secretaries of local organisations and acting as volunteers on a regular or ad hoc basis to many more.



The Trust Fund

The Trust Fund was established in July 1981 with the benefit of donations of £1,250 from former members of the club. A further bequest of £500 was received later from the widow of a former Rotarian. The donors expressed the wish that their gifts should be retained as a form of "working capital" to aid club fund-raising projects as appropriate. This wish has been honoured by the club when, for example, the fund advanced £600 towards a local Cardio Memo Appeal. This advance was later repaid by the club out of other projects.

As the fund itself had been created for charitable purposes the club decided to channel the members' Rotary Foundation contributions through this trust by way of a deed of covenant.

This method was adopted in 1983 and so far to date these contributions together with the associated income tax advantage have amounted to almost £5,000. Donations from this fund have included £1,000 to the Rotary Polio Plus Appeal to which was added £500 donated by some members by way of individual covenants. Other donations have been in response to specific appeals for aid in Bangladesh and Bosnia/Croatia.

The Trust was established by deed for charitable purposes with the aim of supporting any reasonable charitable cause or need as directed by the members of the Rotary Club in a special meeting. The trustees appointed by the Club are the President, the President Elect, the Treasurer and the Secretary.

Trust Fund-Raising

The club's two major annual fund-raising activities making the greatest contribution to the Trust Fund are the Golf Day and the Christmas Collections. The golf day, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2011, is held each June and enjoys the support of local businesses who as well as entering teams, sponsor holes and provide prizes. The day ends with a first class meal followed by entertainment and on average raises £4,000 each year.

No Christmas has passed without a lot

of effort being put into our annual Christmas collections. On two weekends Rotarians and Past Rotarians collect outside Sainsbury's and Tesco's and for five or six nights we walk round the streets of Bexhill with one of our number dressed as Father Christmas. The amounts raised annually are usually between £3,000 and £4,000 but can vary according to the weather and the economic climate. The club's fund-raising efforts over recent years have never dropped below £15,000 and are usually around the £20,000 mark.

Paul Harris Fellowships

In the mid 80's the Paul Harris Fellowship (PHF) scheme was introduced whereby clubs were invited to nominate a member to receive this distinction and for which the individual club paid a substantial sum to Foundation Funds. The first to be nominated by Bexhill Club was P.P. George Woodfine who was to complete 50 years in Rotary in 1990. By the late 1990's however club members' concerns that this U.S. initiated award risked being devalued by being awarded for donations to Rotary Foundation led to a hiatus in its use. This position prevailed until 2005/6 when Club President David Stedman led a sub-committee to conduct a thorough consideration of the award and its possible re-introduction. They concluded that the club should only award a PHF to those members deemed worthy of the distinction by the other club members and their awarding resumed and continues on this basis. In

succeeding years, P.P. Albert Freeman, P.P. Peter Evenden, P.P. Hugh Maynard, P.P. Richard (Dick) Mead and P.P. Peter Longley were similarly honoured. Since 1997 other club members whose commitment to the Rotary movement have earned them a PHF are Alan Bountempo, Frank Field (posthumously), John Griffith, Roger Heyes, Harold Lawrence, John Lewis, Peter Mitchell-Davis, George Rogers, Roy Sharpe, Colin Stutely, Gordon Viner, Malcolm Viner, Keith Walter and Alan Winship. The club has also awarded one to an Honorary Member – Tony Bough.

The club has also recognised club members for outstanding efforts and service by the award of a Four Avenues of Service Citation. Only one nominee is eligible per club each Rotary year and the recipients have been Peter Mitchell-Davis, John Wakeford, John Crone, Rodney Gadsden, Gordon Viner, Harold Lawrence, Richard Caie and John Wilson.

Odds and Ends

In 1981 members attended a series of meetings on the subject of the new marvel, the silicon chip. We came away wondering how this complicated bit of apparatus was likely to affect our lives, little knowing then, how much we would all be controlled by the chip in years to come. The new wishing well on the West Parade was completed and after initial difficulties in security and emptying the well of coins, it proved to be a great asset and

continued to raise good sums of money for our charities. This stayed in place until 2010 when it and the sundial installed in 2002, were removed as part of a seafront redevelopment. A new sundial was installed in 2012 opposite the Colonnade but at the time of writing a new site for the wishing well has yet to be agreed with the council.

The club's 60th Anniversary was looming in 1983 and, in 1982, an ad hoc committee looked into the



arrangements. A special club banner was designed and a celebration dinner was held at Drusilla's on 23rd July 1983. To mark the anniversary two silver-gilt discs were engraved 1923 and 1963 and attached to the presidential collar. In 1984 Albert Freeman made a large Rotary Wheel which could be displayed at the many outside functions in which we took part. In 1985, a further inter club/contact clubs visit took place in Ostend which was a great success. In 1986, a change in the method of subscription payments was implemented. Up to then payment for meals was made on the day of attendance, and subscriptions were

paid separately. It was decided that in future a combined subscription to include the costs of all meals for the year be charged. This was a good arrangement as far as the Treasurer was concerned because if a member did not turn up for the meal, his payment was automatically forfeited, thereby swelling club funds by a small amount.

The club minutes record that the Christmas collections raised a record £1,375.97 in 1986. 1989 saw the issue of new banners, the first of which was taken to Ostend where a luncheon meeting was held with Gouda Rotary Club.

Overseas Visits

In 1989, a visit to Poland was made by President Albert Freeman and Vice President John Brockhurst accompanying Rotarian Dr. Marcel Stefanski of the Douai Club (who was the initiator behind the project) to encourage the formation of a new Rotary Club in Lublin. This bore fruit and the same members plus Michael Lovitt attended their Charter Night.

Overseas visits continued to feature regularly in the first decade of the new century with visits to St. Pol for the Remembrance Day race meeting and wreath laying, a 2006 combined visit by

the club and Gouda to the WW1 battlefields and, in 2008, a visit to the R.C. of Gibraltar, district 1120's most southerly club! Members of both Bexhill and Gouda met again in Rotterdam to cheer on Rotarian Frank Field in the city's marathon.

On the club social side, the first circulatory dinner was organised in 1990 when members visited successive homes for the three or four courses prepared by the host households. Great fun was had by one and all and a wonderful feeling of fellowship arose from the functions.

Club Membership

During the war years club membership dropped very considerably but by the 1960's they were in the upper 50's. Throughout the 1980's and into the 90's the club continued to thrive despite a mid 90's dip in membership. In 1999 there were 36 members and by 2009 membership had reached just over 40. In 1990 the question of club membership was debated in respect of numbers and whether or not we wished to become larger numerically. It was agreed that the numbers should not vary dramatically from the present 55 even though there was an age imbalance

at that time.

The constant quest for new younger members continued but the numbers began to decrease due to resignation, retirements and, of course, the occasional death. By 1997 the total membership was under 40, but a number of younger men had joined the club bringing fresh enthusiasm and new ideas. In 1992, name badges were issued and members were expected to wear them so that we would all know to whom we were speaking!

Membership has remained strong and as we celebrate our 90th year stands at 39.

General Activities

From 1981, the club engaged upon numerous activities supporting local organisations and fund-raising for worthwhile projects. Riding for the Disabled was initiated very successfully. A sponsored swim raised almost £800 shared between Riding for the Disabled and St. Mary's School League of Friends.

In 1981 a volunteer team drove for two and a half days in hazardous conditions to Avelino in Italy, taking clothes and other items for the victims of the terrible earthquake that happened there. Members of the Rotary team included Albert Freeman, Arthur Sims, Michael Robinson and Keith Walter with members of Bexhill Round Table forming the other team.

In 1982 the first of many fashion shows by Hastings College, sponsored and staffed by Bexhill Rotary Club, took place at the De La Warr Pavilion. In that same year the first speaking competition for local schools was organised. Teams vied for the honour of receiving the Speakers Shield donated by P.P. Frank Chaplin and the high standard reached by the many pupils impressed all those fortunate enough to attend the competitions. The Goodwill Goblets, presented by President George Coombs, was a competition of varying sorts between the Rotary Club, Inner Wheel, Round Table and the Ladies Circle. This competition was always good fun and many clever ideas for the challenges came forth. In 1983, the first car boot



sale was organised (raising £180) and, in the same year, mock interviews were arranged for prospective school leavers. These were fairly well supported and were found to be of great benefit to those pupils attending.

In 1984 the Eye Laser Appeal opened and Bexhill Rotary organised an ad hoc committee to look into the ways and means of raising £1,000. This was completed successfully over a period of the next few years. In 1985 we sent 1.5 tons of books to the Ranfurley Library and many further loads were sent in the following years. In 1985 an Auction of Promises raised funds for the Eye Laser Appeal.

A further innovation was the organisation of "Messiah from Scratch" at the De La Warr Pavilion, when a large 'scratch' choir and orchestra 'rendered' the sacred music with great competence, having the benefit of professional soloists. In 1988 a trivial pursuits evening was held raising £158.20 for the Bexhill Hospital. In 1989 we contributed funds for the Lockerbie air disaster. Children were taken on a visit to Brighton Dolphinarium.

In 1990, old folk were taken on various outings including Batemans at Burwash, the home of Rudyard Kipling. In 1992, £500 was raised for a garden and seat at St Mary's School. We had a youth exchange visit by students from South Africa.

An ad hoc committee was formed to start fund-raising for the projected visit by local needy children to Euro-Disney in France. It was estimated that £10,000 would have to be raised for the all-inclusive visit - which it was, and the surplus was divided three ways between local children's charities. Towards this end, the first of the very successful golf charity matches at Cooden Beach Golf Club was organised by P.P. Roy Clarke and Rotarian Alan Buontempo. Each successive annual match seemed to beat the total raised by the previous year and a very considerable sum was raised, usually in the region of £4,500.

In 1993, £2,000 was raised from Opera Brava who presented an open-air opera in the evening. Of course it rained! Profits were given to St. Michael's Hospice. In the same year, the club gave £1,500 to the De La Warr Trust towards the cost of replacing the roundels missing from the De La Warr Pavilion since the war.

In 1994 Bexhill held its first "Edwardian Week" and the Rotary Club was given the responsibility of organising the procession through the main shopping streets. A GSE team from Malaysia visited the club for five days and an extensive programme was laid on for them and new friends made. A further young musicians competition was held this year. Another GSE team, this time from Georgia USA, visited us in 1996.



New Initiatives

Major fund-raising initiatives in the new millennium included raising £2,500 in support of the 2006/07 District Governor's project to supply wheelchairs to Serbia and South Africa. This sum purchased 40 wheelchairs, the second highest in the District. Swift action was required in January 2005 to organise a collection for the survivors of the terrible Tsunami that swept the coastal regions of many Asian countries on 26th December 2004. Ever ready to find new events that combine fund-raising with fun and entertainment, in 2013 the club held 'Ale and Arty', a beer festival, in partnership with the De La Warr Pavilion, raising funds for Macmillan Cancer Support, Demelza Hospice Care for Children, Kids Out and

other Rotary charities. The club's success over this period can largely be attributed to repeating a number of well worthwhile long-standing initiatives that have been greatly appreciated by those who have benefited. Some of our initiatives have also raised considerable sums of money for local and international charities but some of our initiatives do not of course raise any funds for charities but give much pleasure and assistance to others old and young. Some examples of these are our annual tea party for local elderly people, monthly driving of blind people to their club, regular maintenance of hearing aids by a trained team of Rotarians and reading partners in local schools.

Club Organisation

The Bexhill Rotary Club was chartered as a fortnightly club and over the latter years there have been a number of attempts by the Council on Legislation, notably in 1991, to decree that "all Rotary Clubs become weekly". Naturally we instructed our voting delegate to vote AGAINST and Hastings and Folkestone Rotary Clubs supported us. The proposed enactment did not succeed. In 1992, the unthinkable happened and Rotary

permitted the acceptance of the fairer sex into its membership. Thus all clubs became "dual gender" and Bexhill Club, not at the time considering the introduction of women into its midst, at every AGM, passed a solemn resolution that "this club shall revert to single gender". This had to be abandoned when equal opportunities legislation swept such chauvinism aside but the club has yet to attract a lady into its membership.



Meeting Venues

We had been meeting at the De La Warr Pavilion for many years at lunchtime. In 1994 there was a suggestion that the time of meetings should be in the early evening and that we should become what was beginning to emerge in the District as a twilight club. This suggestion started a long, tedious and sometimes acrimonious debate and the subject was not helped when we were told that the Elizabeth Room of the De La Warr Pavilion was to be refurbished and that we would be unable to meet there for a number of months. Lunch meetings were transferred to Bexhill Sailing Club in 1995 but the majority of members were unhappy with the ambience of the room and the quality of the food so, after further debate, a 2005 referendum resulted in a change to twilight meeting

at 6.15pm on the first and third Tuesdays and at 7.30pm on the fifth Tuesdays, when they occurred.

In 1997 the club moved to the Grand Hotel in Sea Road and, following its closure, to The Mermaid (later the Sackville Hotel and now the Coast Bar & Grill) on De La Warr Parade. We moved to our present meeting venue, Cooden Beach Golf Club, in 2005, and in 2007 due to increasing difficulty in recruiting new members who would have found it a problem getting to meetings by 6pm, we changed again to a later time of 7 for 7.15pm. The new meeting time and venue has undoubtedly been a great success as since then we have recruited a significant number of new members and we enjoy excellent food and facilities.

Into the Future

At its 90th Anniversary Bexhill Rotary Club remains in good health with a steady flow of new members to inject new ideas and vigour into its charitable and social activities.

The club continues to provide support for the community and citizens of Bexhill-on-Sea as it starts to look towards celebrating a century of "Service Above Self" in 2023.

Founder Members

President: F B Bending

Vice President: R C Sewell

Secretary: R H Burstow

Treasurer: F A Scott

H W Maycock

T J Austin

W J Sargent

F B Wimshurst

A G Wells

R C Hampton

A Whicher

Geo. Sexton

W T Longley

H G Stapylton-Smith

J P Mummery

F L Hubbard

J E Maynard

E Gray

S J Taylor

R C Gibb

H N Suter

E Exley

H G Heather



Past Presidents

Bending F B	1923	Wilton B OBE	1968
Bending F B	1924	Coombs G C	1969
Burstow R H	1925	Gray L F ERD	1970
Hubbard F L	1926	Mead R H	1971
Madeley H J	1927	Griffith D R	1972
Mummery J P	1928	Maynard J H	1973
Maynard J E	1929	Kimber D R	1974
Sexton G	1930	Tyler J B MC	1975
Jones T F	1931	Evans C B	1976
Webber P	1932	Lewis J F	1977
Austin T J	1933	Bough A H	1978
Humphreys L G	1934	Bernie Rev N	1979
Wheatley E A	1935	Chaplin F	1980
Foster G E J	1936	Freeman A	1981
Marchant T E	1937	Wakeford J	1982
Jansen H B	1938	Sharpe R	1983
Gun W	1939	Sims A F	1984
Courtney S W	1940	Wicks M	1985
Courtney S W	1941	Rogers J G	1986
Gardner A E	1942	Last D	1987
Gardner A E	1943	Woolf J	1988
Marwood F C	1944	Viner G	1989
Austin R N	1945	Brockhurst J	1990
Woodfine G JP	1946	Viner M	1991
Turpin L C	1947	Clarke R	1992
Sechiari St JJGA	1948	Wilford J	1993
Marchant J P	1949	Crone J	1994
Ruffhead R G	1950	Raeburn J D	1995
Jones T F	1951	Gadsden R	1996
Toleman R J	1952	Sharpe R	1997
Clarkstone F L	1953	Lovitt M	1998
Davis G L	1954	Caie R	1999
Baker J	1955	Burke J P	2000
Phelps H R	1956	Mitchell-Davis P	2001
Woodfine G JP	1957	Lawrence H	2002
Clare F W	1958	Heyes R	2003
Huggard A W	1959	Stutely C	2004
Bending F R	1960	Stedman D	2005
Ward H H	1961	Dixon R	2006
Williams A H	1962	Meadows J	2007
Gardner A E	1963	Harrison R	2008
Evenden P H	1964	Batey R	2009
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It was a Sunday morning early in 1923 when it all happened. Rotary was beginning to spread all over the country and at "The Dove Cot" in Wickham Avenue, Cecil Sewell and Frank Bending met to discuss whether Bexhill should be in or out of this new movement;
they opted for 'in'.

